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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the different types of presentations employed in various forms of impromptu and limited preparation speaking assignments in public speaking, interpersonal communication, and argumentation instruction. It also highlights the benefits associated with each activity, for example, improved thinking skills. The paper's presentations are designed for fledgling speakers and are intended to mesh with specific course material, ethical issues, and current events topics. Assignments in the paper include mini-debates over cultural questions, outline response presentations, and speeches introducing a classmate. (CR)

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ED 409 599

LIMITING TIME AND EXPANDING THE MIND: USING LIMITED PREPARATION IN THE BASIC COURSE.

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INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, I have utilized various forms of impromptu and limited preparation speaking assignments both in my public speaking, interpersonal communication, and argumentation sections. This handout briefly details the different types of presentations employed and highlights the benefits associated with each activity. These presentations are designed for fledgling speakers and intended to intricately mesh with specific course material, ethical issues, and current events topics.

CURRENT EVENTS OPINION

Students are asked to give an unrehearsed opinion concerning current events issues (e.g. The Simpson Trial, Cloning, Campaign Finance Reform). They may not even know a great deal about the subject in question, but it is the development of their speaking and critical thinking skills which are developed through the exercise. Sometimes, students are given a choice of issues to address which allows them to select the subject they are most familiar with.

Benefits: 1) Develop confidence in "off the cuff" speaking skills, 2) Encourage greater interest in current events, and 3) Enhance their understanding of argumentation and use of analysis and evidence. to support major claims.

ETHICAL SCENARIOS

Student speakers are asked to respond to a question concerning an ethical issue (e.g. Is it ever okay to lie to your spouse or your parents?). These questions are often culled from "Dear Abby" columns, articles by various counselors (such as Dr. James Dobson), and scenarios outlined in various narratives (e.g. Anthony Robbins, Personal Power). Students are encouraged to base their answers upon a variety of precepts including their personal, religious, or organizational affiliations (e.g. the military).

Benefits: 1) Develop critical thinking skills, 2) Encourage greater interest in ethical issues, 3) Utilize personal experience as a framework for answering and 4) Can promote excellent class discussion and debate.

MINI-DEBATES OVER CULTURAL QUESTIONS

This exercise requires students to debate a question pertaining to popular culture issues (e.g. Which movie deserves to win the Oscar for Best Picture?, Which fast food chain is the best?). In past semesters, this activity has worked successfully in both my public speaking and forensics lab courses as a starter for units focusing upon persuasion and argumentation formats. Each speaker is given an equal amount of time to argue, counterargue, and question the claims of their opponent.

Benefits: 1) Develops critical thinking skills, 2) Encourages students to learn the basic argument-response structure, 3) Heightens their interest and awareness of cultural issues, and 4) Improves public speaking and interviewing skills.

OUTLINE RESPONSE PRESENTATIONS

This activity requires students to prepare at home or inclass to assist in answering key questions related to course material from specific chapters or units. Students may prepare for this exercise individually, in dyads, or small groups (3-5 members). Each cluster or individual is asked to generate answers to specific questions provided by the instructor. They are encouraged to cite examples or develop role play scenarios which allow the concepts to be demonstrated and visualized for the audience. Students are not allowed to use extensive notes and they are encouraged to stand and move away from desks and podiums while addressing the class. These responses assist and help build the notes and core concepts associated with an instructor's lecture. In-class prep time should be limited to 10 minutes in order to maintain a high degree of response spontaneity.

Benefits: 1) Promotes greater student involvement in class discussion and review of class material, 2) Encourages students to use their imagination and personal experience in order to "teach" key concepts, and 3) Develop their ability to communicate and effectively work in groups and dyadic teams.

SPEECHES OF INTRO

Students interview each other for 15 minutes on a side in order to develop a speech which introduces their partner to the class. This assignment is one to use early on in the semester as an icebreaker for your students. The presentation should run 2-5 minutes in length in order to encourage students to present a fully developed speech which features 3 part structure (intro, body, and conclusion). Ideally, some lecture and discussion concerning speech structure should proceed this assignment. Speakers are encouraged to go beyond the basic biographical information in order to gain a greater understanding of their partner's likes, dislikes, and life philosophies.

Benefits: 1) Promotes greater class cohesion, 2) Develops interview skills, 3) Encourages the use of basic outline structure, and 4) Enhances the students ability to organize and present information in a meaningful format.

RANDOM TOPIC USE

Students are warned in advance that key concepts from a specific chapter will be tested via an oral exam. Each class member reaches into a bag, on the appointed class day, and selects a slip of paper containing a concept or term reviewed in previous class discussions. Students are then given five minutes or less to briefly outline their response or knowledge of the concept on a notecard before presenting their answer to the class. This exercise works extremely well as a primer for a midterm or final exam and the process can be repeated twice or three times during one class meeting if prep time is limited accordingly.

Benefits: 1) Promotes recall and retention of key instructional concepts and terms, 2) Encourages students to prepare for class by critically reading assigned and reviewed material, 3) Develop public speaking skills, and 4) Heighten student's ability to process and organize their basic perceptions of core concepts from the class text and/or lecture.